SCHOOL OF
Graduate Studies

Concordia
UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies News

Volume 8, no. 2 June 1995

Joint Doctoral Programme in Administration

by Phil Moscovitch

Next year Concordia's doctoral programme in Administration will celebrate twenty years of excellence. And the future looks bright as enrollment increases and new international ties are forged with other institutions.

The Ph.D in Administration is a joint programme, run in collaboration with McGill University, l'Université de Québec à Montréal, and the École des Hautes Études Commerciales of l'Université de Montréal. At the time of its inception back in 1976, it was the only joint doctoral programme in the city. Thanks to its success, the concept of offering joint doctoral degrees has spread to a number of other disciplines at the University.

Heather Thomson, Assistant Director of Concordia's M.Sc and Ph.D in Administration, explains that a joint Ph.D. programme offers students the best of both worlds: at the University, they work with the supervisor who can best guide them in their studies; at the same time they take advantage of the resources available at the other institutions. Because both English and French-language schools are involved, students must be comfortable working with both languages.

"The universities' facilities are accessible to all students. The joint aspect is in terms of the resources: the classes, the faculty, the library, and the computers," Thomson says.

Concordia students also benefit, Thomson says, from a great deal of freedom in setting their own course of study. "They have more flexibility in terms of their research. In some programmes you're admitted and linked immediately with a faculty member to work in their area of research and interest. Here the students formulate their own committee, and choose their supervisor. So there is more choice and there are more options for the students."

And student choice is maximized because of the highly varied backgrounds of the professors in Concordia's Faculty of Commerce and Administration. Thomson says that "if a student has a slightly different concept that they want to follow for their Ph.D studies, they're more likely to find someone here, with the diversity of backgrounds and training, than at some other universities where most of the faculties have been trained at only a few specific schools."

Thanks to the shared administration of the programme, doctoral students have access to over 300 professors, and library collections which hold a combined total of 6.5 million book and periodical titles.

Five disciplines are brought under the umbrella of Concordia's Ph.D. in Administration programme:

Joint Doctoral Programme in Administration

Marketing, Finance, Decision Sciences and Management Information Systems, Accounting, and Management.

The programme, which students are expected to complete within five years, has three phases: preparation, specialization, and dissertation. The first phase consists of course work exclusively, while the second includes seminars, a theory paper, and a comprehensive exam. The dissertation is usually completed within two years of the completion of the second phase.

"We're very strong in certain areas," says **Lorne Switzer**, Director of the M.Sc and Ph.D in Administration Programmes. "Capital markets in Finance, and derivatives securities for example. We're also strong in Marketing and in the areas of personnel management and organizational psychology. We've been getting some very good work coming out of the Accounting Department. As far as Decision Sciences, they have a very strong publication record in the areas of operations research and business statistics."

Most graduates of the programme, of course, go on to careers in academia, with several having recently been hired at leading universities. Others find employment in areas such as the public sector, banking, and consulting. Switzer says that employers, knowing the quality of the programme, are often eager to hire doctoral students prior to the completion of their dissertations.

Five students pursuing research in each of the programme's major disciplines demonstrate the diversity and quality of the work being done at Concordia, and the range of backgrounds and career goals of doctoral students in the Ph.D. in Administration programme.

Management student Louise Kelly is examining the ways a company's character affects its strategy. Roy Toffoli, in Marketing, is exploring cultural differences in people's responses to advertising. In the area of Finance, Howard Nemiroff is working to understand and improve the flow of information at stock exchanges, while Alejandro Ramirez, a Decision Sciences and Management Information Systems student, is looking at training applications for Hypertext software. In Accountancy, Anamitra Shome will explore the cognitive processes auditors go through when making key decisions.

Louise Kelly says her research is "unusual" for a business school. A Management student, she is using a literary approach to look at patterns in business strategy over time. "It's different from basic North American business-type theory. What I'm doing is more interpretive and subjective," she explains.

Kelly, who is in the midst of writing her dissertation, is examining the effects of corporate character on companies' strategy.

"Character comes from the history, culture, and traditions of the firm. The founder often is a big influence on the character of the firm. That, I argue, is more stable over time than strategy. Strategy typically changes on a two to five year cycle. So I'm interested in how the character of the firm affects the choice of strategy," she says.

In order to understand the interrelationship of the two factors, Kelly is studying the annual reports of five major computer hardware and software companies over a ten to twenty-year period. The literary approach comes into play in her treatment of the company's story as a narrative, and its character as a persona that it projects.

Apart from a discussion of performance, the annual report presents the image which a company wants to put forward. Studying the reports over a period of time gives her insights into the nature of a corporation's character.

As an example, Kelly discusses her research into the relationship between character and strategy at Texas Instruments. From 1974 to 1994 the company's reports never discuss ethical or environmental issues; the word marketing doesn't put in an appearance until 1985.

Kelly says that's because Texas Instruments is a corporation whose world-view is very cautious. "They rely very much on the scientific approach. Their core competence is technological innovation." Where some corporations see themselves as social innovators, TI, she explains, is uncomfortable dealing with subjective issues.

A disastrous entry into the personal computing market in 1983 — the company wound up writing off six hundred million dollars worth of inventory — led Texas Instruments to launch a major strategy review. But even then they stayed true to their corporate character: the review took seven years. According to Kelly, "that is typical of the character of the firm — very systematic and cautious."

After completing her B.A in Economics at McGill, Kelly got a job with publishers Prentice-Hall Canada in sales and marketing, and later in editorial. But she had her eyes on an academic career and came to

Joint Doctoral Programme in Administration

Concordia to do an M.B.A.

The University, Kelly says, has always felt like "a second home" to her. Not only is her father a professor of Management, but she finds Concordia "very community-oriented." At the same time, being in a joint programme allows her to benefit from a range of theoretical approaches to her field.

"I think the joint programme is an excellent idea, just because you get exposed to a much wider range of orientations and ideologies. In my department, in Management, our group is probably the most conservative and numbers-oriented, with a scientific approach," she says. "If I was just at Concordia I wouldn't have had the chance to be influenced by people who were doing other kinds of things."

Roy Toffoli's cross-cultural research in the area of marketing should help advertisers mount their campaigns more effectively. He is studying the effects of a particular type of advertising on English Canadians and Hong Kong Chinese.

Toffoli is looking at two-sided advertising — commercials that bring up negative attributes of the product in order to increase the ad's credibility. He says this type of advertising (classic examples are the Volkswagen Beetle and Avis "we try harder" campaigns) is growing in popularity in North America. But it may not be as effective among other populations.

"English Canadians are representative of an individualist culture, and Hong Kong Chinese are representative of a collectivist culture. There is a theory in social cognition which says these two cultures will react differently to attributional processes — the way they attribute causes to a spokesperson's actions," he says.

Members of individualist cultures, he explains, are more likely to take two-sided messages at face value and believe that the advertisers are more honest and, consequently, more credible. People who come from a more collectivist background, on the other hand, are less persuaded by such an approach. Generally, they tend to look more at context when determining an individual's motivation.

"I'm claiming that in a collectivist culture a message receiver will not react the same way to a two-sided message," Toffoli says. "You would see no difference in effect between one or two-sided messages among the Hong Kong Chinese, so there would be no advantage to using that kind of strategy."

Two-sided advertising is becoming more popular in North America, but he warns that advertisers shouldn't get carried away with its success. What works here may very well not work in a radically different culture. And that's an important message, as more marketing strategies are being globalized.

Toffoli, who hopes to have his dissertation completed by the end of the year, says he's "just trying to prove that this may be localized. It may be more effective for members of individualist cultures rather than on an international scale."

When he entered the programme in 1988, Toffoli was 43 years old. He had begun his second career seven years earlier, when, after having taught chemistry and English as a second language at the high school level for years, he took a job at the École Polytechnique's Centre for Industrial Innovation. He spent five years there in administration, and went on to lecture part-time in management and marketing at both McGill and Concordia.

Hoping to eventually land a full-time academic position, Toffoli decided to enter Concordia's Ph.D. in Administration programme. He says that he appreciated the joint nature of the programme: "The nice thing about the programme is that there were joint courses, and I really loved that. It was a bilingual programme and it exposed us to faculty from all four universities — French and English faculty with different philosophies and different epistemological stances. It was quite interesting in that sense."

"I'm going to keep typing if you don't mind," **Howard Nemiroff** tells me over the phone. The Finance student, who is wrapping up his dissertation, has accepted a faculty position at Saint Mary's University in Halifax. The job starts in September.

Unlike Toffoli, Nemiroff, who holds a B.A in Economics from the University of Western Ontario and an Economics M.A from Concordia, says he was not particularly interested in the joint aspect of the programme. His main reasons in choosing to continue his graduate work at Concordia were the reputation of the Finance Department and the opportunity to have his research supervised by Professor Lawrence Kryzanowski.

"I specifically chose Concordia because of its strength in finance relative to the other schools," he says. Nemiroff adds that "the fact that it is a joint programme lets me be in an environment which I'm comfortable with, and take courses at other schools if need be."

Joint Doctoral Programme in Administration

His research focusses on the effects of imposed frictions on trading at North American stock markets — specifically, the Toronto, Montreal, and New York exchanges. A friction is an event that impedes or prevents the trading of a stock; imposed frictions occur when the stock exchange deliberately prevents a particular company's stock from being traded.

Nemiroff explains that "the main one I'm looking at is what's called a trading halt. When, for whatever reasons — be they informational or trade imbalance — the exchange feels that there's something which the firm is not disclosing, the exchange will approach the firm, who will tell them either that something is happening or isn't happening. If there is news that has not been disseminated to all the market participants, then the exchange will impose a halt."

Trading must come to a stop when a company is suspected of withholding information, because it is important for all traders to have equal access to knowledge about the firm. Otherwise, some traders hold an unfair advantage over others.

"What I want to look at is to see if there is any kind of funny stuff happening before this — in other words, if there are insiders taking advantage of this privileged information, which is a no-no. Then I look at how quickly the market reacts after trading starts again, to see if everybody did have access to this information, and whether they reacted properly," Nemiroff says.

Generally, he has found that the markets do react the way they would be expected to, with prices rising very quickly once good news is released, and with downward pressure in response to bad news. Rapid and appropriate reactions, he says, demonstrate that information flows efficiently in the stock market.

Nemiroff explains that his work will allow us some insight into ways that the functioning of stock markets can be improved: "I think it's important to see how we can improve the way the markets work. I think that informational efficiency is probably the primary goal of this research, just in terms of trying to uncover if there are any things that we can pinpoint and perhaps rectify in the future."

Alejandro Ramirez, (40), began his academic career as a physicist before turning to Industrial Engineering, and finally, Decision Sciences and Management Information Systems.

In 1980, Ramirez received his degree in physics from the Monterey Technological Institute for Higher Education (ITESM) in his native Mexico. But it was a bad time to be a young Mexican physicist. Because research in the field was very expensive, the government was shutting down research centres across the country.

Ramirez joined the faculty at ITESM, teaching introductory math and physics, while looking for an applied field in which he could use his talents. Operational research — an area closely related to management information systems — fit the bill. He went to Syracuse University and completed an M.Sc in the field in 1983.

After returning to Mexico and a job at ITESM, Ramirez became involved with coordinating faculty development programmes. He set up exchanges between ITESM and a number of American universities. When he moved to Canada and entered Concordia's doctoral programme in Administration in 1991, Ramirez realized that ties between his old university and Concordia would be a natural. He called his former colleagues in Monterey to discuss the possibility of links between the universities.

With 28 campuses and 40 000 students, ITESM is the largest private university in Mexico. Ramirez says he was immediately struck by similarities between the two institutions: "Concordia is very much like ITESM in some ways. Both are very much oriented towards students who are not full-time all the time. If you are working and want to do your M.B.A, for example, the University gives you full opportunity to enjoy the best of both worlds."

Several ITESM students have expressed interest in coming to Concordia to do graduate work, and University faculty may soon visit in Mexico.

Ramirez is in Phase II of the programme; he is completing a theory paper which will form the backbone of his dissertation proposal. He plans to look at job training applications for Hypertext software. Hypertext allows a user to read text in a non-linear, non-sequential manner. Windows "Help" programmes, in which the reader can click from one topic to any other, are an example of Hypertext.

More importantly, Hypertext forms the basis for the part of the Internet called the World Wide Web, combining text, sound, and images.

"What I'm doing right now is research on computer-based training," Ramirez says. "This kind of knowledge would be very valuable for Latin American universities. Instead of having to send their professors to North American universities, they can actually get

Joint Doctoral Programme in Administration

linked through the Internet, be trained by computer, and get immediate feedback from the faculty in other universities."

In order to measure the effectiveness of Hypertext as a training tool, Ramirez hopes to work with an investment company using the software to train people in portfolio management.

"I'm trying to measure statistically what the actual impact of using this kind of a tool for training is," Ramirez says. On the basis of that statistical determination, he plans to develop further training applications for Hypertext.

Anamitra Shome, an Accountancy student, hopes to understand how accountants make important decisions in the course of auditing corporate finances.

Shome became interested in accountancy after having earned a bachelor's degree in biology and an M.A. in history in his native India. After completing the master's degree, he went to work for a bank in New Delhi. "I did a lot of foreign-exchange transactions and so on. I sort of drifted into accountancy, building on my banking experience," he says.

After completing an M.B.A at Saint Mary's University, Shome entered Concordia's doctoral programme in Administration in 1992. He chose to do his doctorate at Concordia because of the reputation of the University's business school, and its orientation towards non-traditional students.

"The Faculty of Commerce and Administration is pretty well-known for the calibre of its teachers. The research that it produces is pretty much on a par, if not better, than that of a few better known universities," he says.

The University has "good research-oriented faculty, faculty with good teaching experience, and an orientation towards real-world problems rather than purely academic issues."

Having nearly completed Phase II of the programme, Shome will soon begin work on his dissertation. He hopes to complete it within eighteen months. He plans to look at the cognitive processes auditors undergo when making decisions.

During the auditing process, auditors make crucial decisions about the number of transactions and accounts they should look at. A more in-depth audit will be more complete, but will also significantly increase costs.

Shome explains that "these decisions have far-reaching implications." Investors who lose money, for example, could blame an auditor for not having looked closely enough at a company's books.

"Auditors tend to treat these decisions with a great deal of seriousness. The exact cognitive processes that they invoke when making those decisions is a fascinating area of study," Shome says.

Shome is typical of Ph.D. in Administration students in finding that the joint programme offers them the opportunity to work with Concordia faculty, while taking advantage of the resources of all four institutions.

"You have a wider selection of courses and skills that you can choose from. There are certain areas at Concordia that are stronger than other places and other universities would be stronger in other areas. Those strengths are put together and that allows you greater freedom as far as your choiees are concerned," Shome says.

He adds that "another advantage is that you get to learn French. You have to have some French before you join the programme, but once you are in a course you find that you have to improve on it faster than you had anticipated — which is great, actually."

For further information, please contact:

Assistant Director
PhD in Administration
Faculty of Commerce & Administration
Concordia University
1550 de Maisonneuve
Montreal, Quebec
Tel: (514) 848-2711-
Fax: (514) 848-4547-

Editorial Committee:
Chair: D. Markiewicz 3889
Editor: D. MacFadden
Photographer: J. Cézar
Printing: Concordia Printing Services
Published by:
School of Graduate Studies
Mailing Address:
1455 de Maisonneuve West
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8
Location:
2135 MacKay Street
Telephone:
(514) 848-3808
Fax Number:
(514) 848-2812

Women & Work Symposium

On May 4, 1995, the MBA Programme of the Faculty of Commerce and Administration sponsored its second edition of the Women & Work Symposium. Once again, it was an unqualified success. The Symposium included three main activities: a career options workshop, a panel discussion and an evening address by Micheline Charest, Chairman and CEO of CINAR Films Inc., a leading Canadian company involved in the development, production, post-production and international distribution of non-violent family television programming.

MBA alumna Patricia Lenkov (left) hosted the day's events on behalf of the organizing committee. She is shown above with the morning panelists - all successful Concordia MBA grads: Christian Findlay (Royal Bank), Marie Lafleur (Martineau Walker), Dale Webber (Air Canada), Danielle Choquette (Bell Sygma), Yvonne Callaway-Smith (Callaway Communications) and Hazel Mah (Le Piment Rouge).

In the morning, six prominent business women, all MBA alumni, shared their experiences with an audience composed mostly of MBA students. They presented the crucial attitudes any worker entering the workforce needs to develop, in the current context of rapid change and downsizing.

The first speaker, **Christian Findley**, from the **Royal Bank**, shared her experience, as a mother of two children, of having to juggle family responsibilities and several promotions. **Dale Webber**, from **Air Canada**, stressed the importance, for a recently graduated MBA, of having open thinking and leaving aside individualistic attitudes, in order to cultivate team spirit. **Marie Lafleur**, a lawyer in Intellectual Property at **Martineau Walker**, explained the enormous amount of stress and pressures her job entails as well as how challenging a task it is to try to have a family life in such a context. **Danielle Choquette**, from **Bell Sygma**, brought the point of view of a successful mother, who graduated from the MBA Programme while working fulltime in a top management position. **Yvonne Callaway-Smith**, who just launched **Callaway Communications**, stressed the importance for women of actively networking in a variety of social contexts (school, work, social events, sports, etc.). And finally, **Hazel Mah**, from **Le Piment Rouge Restaurant**, shared with the audience a rich experience as a woman starting up her own company and the challenges she had to face as the owner.

In the afternoon, the thought-provoking panel commented on quotations from the book *Members of the Club - The Coming of Age of Executive Women.* The excellent discussion that ensued demonstrated the very difficult choices that women are faced with in deciding to work to live or to live to work. The paradigm of Family-Career-Children remains. The guilty feelings will linger.

This very stimulating day reached its peak with the address of **Micheline Charest**, Chairman and CEO of **CINAR Films Inc.**, on "Quality of Life for the Working Woman in the New Business Environment". She provided the audience with many personal insights into the very difficulty choices that women are faced with. Mrs. Charest said that the "quality of life means status and recognition along with increased responsibility. It means taking pleasure in maintaining a healthy balance between an enriching career and family. It means having time for children, friends, and for oneself. It means being in control of one's life". And she also encouraged women in the audience to consider going into business for themselves. "Study your market, do your homework and get to know the segment of the industry that interests you inside out - knowledge will serve you well. And, consider partnership - it is hard to be alone - choose your partner well as there is real value in different and varying approaches to problem solving and strategic planning. We can be masters of our own fate."

Women are making progress and the Women & Work Symposium is a wonderful tool for monitoring this progress.